

REMARKS

In the final Official Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 3, 4, and 9 would be allowable if re-written in independent form to include the limitations of the claims from which they depended. Independent claims 7 and 8 were previously allowed.

In an amendment dated January 17, 2005, claim 1 was amended to include the limitations of claim 3, claim 4 to include the limitations of claim 1, and claim 9 to include the limitations of claim 1. **Therefore, each of the claims clearly contained subject matter indicated by the Examiner as allowable.** According to the usual after-final practice, this would normally have resulted in allowance of the application, because all of the claims included subject matter indicated as allowable.

However, the Examiner refused to enter the amendment on the grounds that there were additional dependent claims in the case, and on the grounds that these *dependent* claims *might* recite combinations not disclosed in the original specification, thereby raising “new issues” (even though even a **cursory check** of the claims would have revealed that this is not the case). In effect, the Examiner established a **new policy** of requiring an Applicant to submit several hundred dollars in **extra fees** by filing an RCE (or a petition traversing the refusal to enter the amendment) in order to obtain allowance of an application limited to subject matter indicated as allowable.

Therefore, in accordance with the Examiner’s new policy, Applicant hereby **re-submits** the same¹ **allowable** claims as presented in the after-final response, but in connection with an **RCE** and the corresponding fees.

¹ It is noted that the un-necessary functional phrase “*to ensure that the entire structure is relatively rigid and strong*” has been deleted from the penultimate paragraph of claim 1.

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In addition, new claims 15-20 to recite further advantageous features disclosed in the original specification and drawings. New claims 15-20 depending from claims 7-9, previously indicated as allowable.

Having repeated the amendments made in the after-final amendment, which clearly overcame each of the rejections made in the final Official Action, withdrawal of the rejections and expedited passage of the application to issue is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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